



Compass Rose

Literature and Art Journal

COMPASS ROSE interviews Amy Baur

Compass Rose: *Many of your works use geometric shapes and clean lines combined with the fluidity of nature, where do you find inspiration?*

Amy Baur: From a slight obsession with the horizon line—noting the curvature of the earth and thinking about relationship between balance and imbalance.

CR: *How important is it for your work to be permanent?*

Baur: In my studio work, I'm not at all interested in permanence. In fact, I often work with non-archival materials such as shoe polish, wax and carbon paper and I like to watch how these are malleable with humidity, temperature and time. For the public works, I GREATLY appreciate that we have now come up with a process that makes a photograph impervious to dust, scratches and UV light.

CR: *Is there a satisfaction to leaving behind a permanent piece of yourself?*

Baur: Once a piece of work leaves my studio, is on view in a gallery or is purchased I let it go. I don't really see it as mine any longer. So I would not say it is "a piece of myself" but yes a good amount of satisfaction occurs that there is something out there that will cause someone to pause, really look and maybe relate to.

CR: *After running your own business, what advice do you have for artists hoping to do the same?*

Baur: I did a lot of living and making, made great mistakes, tried all kinds of things before IN PLAIN SIGHT art was ever even actualized. I would say just keep working, make a lot of art, work as often as you can with people who are different than you, listen to people who have lived full lives and maybe brush up on your math skills.

CR: *What are the benefits and struggles of collaborating with other artists? Do you have a preference when it comes to collaborating or working solo?*

Baur: Really depends on the individual. I have had both good and bad experiences. But totally honest I would have to say I prefer to work alone.

CR: *How much freedom do you have when designing commissioned work?*

Baur: Maybe I have had more freedom than I thought. But I tried first to establish a portfolio of public works, which usually means going for the smaller commissions.

Conceptually those on the art selection committee have some sense of what they want—usually slightly narrative with some recognizable imagery. So I got the commissions by including these aspects in the design. More recently, the opportunities are better funded and so it seems the committees are less predetermined in their expectations. But with every commission I am free to set the tone, the sense, the place, and most of the elements I choose to include.

CR: *What is your process for a commission?*

Baur: Every so often a list of opportunities comes through email. We apply for the ones we find interesting. Depending on the requirements this proposal can take 2 hours to 8 hours to complete. Each wants a set of images, a slide list describing those images, resumes, references and a letter of interest. The full day ones usually have asked for a budget and perhaps want fairly defined idea/concept. Then a few weeks later the phone rings and you find out you are one of three finalists. They fly you to wherever the site is. Sometimes this visit is for SOURCE material—to gather ideas and images and then fly back again with a presentation. Or sometimes you present your work on that very first visit. Then a little later you get the call if you got it or not.

In the making of the work, I usually work through computer .pdfs. The client responds back with comments or changes they want. This process goes back and forth for a couple weeks and then once the image is finalized it goes to production. My partner takes care of that end of the commission. Often though I will travel to the site and oversee the installation, which we hire out for.

CR: *Do you worry that the meaning of your work has been or will be lost in any of your pieces?*

Baur: Unfortunately, it is just a fact that it does get lost. And over time I no longer worry about that. Instead I see it that people bring to my work their own way of seeing, their own life experiences and if my work informs that in them then as an artist I feel I have done my job, done all I can do.

CR: *Who has influenced you the most?*

Baur: I love the words and work of Robert Mangold and Eva Hess, for how each, in their own way, is completely genuine. Also I love reading about natural occurrences—how rivers meander, the names for different kinds of wind—things like that are what I think about.

CR: *How much of your work is based off of emotion?*

Baur: Probably majority of it, but all tempered so as to be bigger than just my emotion about something.

CR: *Some of your work borders on the surreal. Were you influenced by the surrealist movement?*

Baur: No. The box constructions I think you are referring to do seem surreal. They are an attempt to create a place vast, quiet place lit with sunlight. The use of incongruous objects pushes them, I think, into that surreal realm. But, I have always photographed utilitarian

objects that I touch and have around me. They made their way into those landscapes for a reason- the result is slightly surreal though that was not my intention.

CR: *What advice would you like to offer other artists?*

Baur: Work, visit places, engage, and work.